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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 07 USNATO 000171

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PARM](#) [KCFE](#) [NATO](#) [RS](#) [OSCE](#)
SUBJECT: NATO: MAY 6, 2008 HLTF MEETING

REF: (A) STATE 047325 (GUIDANCE)

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Richard G. Olson, reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: At the May 6 HLTF, Allies agreed that for now the optimum course for addressing CFE issues with Russia is to adhere to the positions set out in the March 28 NAC statement and the Bucharest Summit Declaration. Allies should remain patient, demonstrating unity and resolve, while we take stock of Russia's position and likely challenges ahead.

-- Many Allies were in listening mode, but those who spoke at the HLTF (U.S., DE, FR, RO, TU, CA, GR, NO and UK) stressed that the NAC statement and communique, taken together, offer a thoughtful and unified message on CFE and a sound proposal--the parallel actions package--to Russia for ending the current impasse.

-- There was clear consensus (at the HLTF and the preceding Quad) that Allies should keep that offer on the table, continue dialogue with Russia, continue to implement the Treaty, and use key upcoming events--such as the meetings at NATO of NRC CHODs on May 14-15 and NRC Defense Ministers June 12-13--to reinforce our unified message to Russia.

-- There were two key subtexts of the HLTF discussion. One was that Allies hoped the U.S.-Russian bilateral dialogue will continue and bear fruit. The U.S. rep (Look) made clear that the situation in Georgia greatly complicated setting up the next U.S.-Russia CFE bilateral meeting. All understood, but nonetheless, placed their current hopes for saving the Treaty on the U.S.-Russia channel. The second was the priority that all Allies attached to adopting unified NATO positions and approaches: better to take extra time and gain a unified NATO position on any next step than to allow an appearance of division.

-- While the U.S. rep and the Chair both noted with concern President Putin's statement at the NRC in Bucharest that Russia would withdraw from CFE if its concerns were not resolved soon, Allies did not focus at this meeting on how NATO should respond to such an eventuality. Some Allies did note that the first window when a notification of Russian intention to withdraw from the Treaty might be likely would be mid-July, one year following their announcement of intended suspension. Allies will return to this issue at the June HLTF meeting, but it was notable that no Ally appeared to view this Putin threat as one requiring an immediate response.

-- France (Grand) suggested, and many Allies welcomed, the idea of an HLTF "retreat" for NATO Allies to consider next

steps, perhaps in the fall or winter. The U.S. noted the timing and agenda would need to be carefully considered especially with regard to the message such a meeting could send to Russia.

-- The Turkish rep (Gun) announced at the HLTF meeting that DFM Kislyak will visit Ankara on May 12 for long-awaited CFE consultations. In the U.S.-Romanian bilateral meeting Romanian rep Micula provided U.S. rep Look with a paper "for A/S Fried" regarding the parallel actions package, which indicates Romania wants specific timeframes and parameters on Russian withdrawal from Moldova in order to be able to ratify Adapted CFE. Micula did not mention this paper at the HLTF nor did he share it with other Allies. (Text of paper included in para 15.) END SUMMARY.

Contacts and Bilaterals

¶2. (C) Turkey announced that DFM Kislyak will visit Ankara on May 12 for long-awaited consultations, primarily on CFE and on other pol-mil issues. The Turks will emphasize they are open to reviewing the flank regime only after entry into force of the Adapted CFE Treaty. They intend to underscore their commitment to CFE, support for the parallel actions package, and the hope that Russia and the U.S. can find a way forward in bilateral discussions.

¶3. (C) Romania (Micula) remarked on bilateral discussions between Presidents Basescu and Putin on the margins of the

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Bucharest Summit, noting that although half of the discussion covered CFE it was mainly a repeat of national positions and did not achieve any progress on reaching a common understanding.

¶4. (C) The U.S. HLTF Representative, State/VCI DAS Karin L. Look, noted that CFE was not a subject of significant substantive discussion at Sochi as the focus was on finalizing the U.S.-Russia Strategic Framework Declaration, which primarily addresses bilateral issues for strategic cooperation, however it does include a reference to CFE among areas where we have differences, but on which we will continue to work together.

-- Regarding the next U.S.-Russia CFE bilateral discussions between Assistant Secretary Fried and MFA Deputy Minister, Director Antonov, Look underscored that the current situation in Georgia-Russia relations had complicated both the sequencing and timing of discussions with Georgian authorities on Gudauta, a prerequisite to the next U.S.-Russia engagement. Although the timing remains unclear, Look noted Fried hoped to propose a meeting for late May.

Way Ahead: HLTF Agrees to Remain Patient

¶5. (C) The main theme of the HLTF (and Quad that preceded it) was consensus that for now the optimum course is to hold to the recently agreed NAC statement, remain patient, and demonstrate unity through a common message while we take stock of Russia's position and likely challenges ahead. The NAC statement and communiqu, taken together, offer a thoughtful and unified message on CFE and a sound proposal "the parallel actions package" to Russia for ending the current impasse. Allies should keep that offer on the table, continue dialogue with Russia, and continue ourselves to implement the Treaty. The current situation, where Allies implement CFE while Russia does not, cannot last forever, but continued Treaty implementation by NATO Allies makes sense for now, since our goal is to draw Russia into a dialogue that leads to resolution of the current situation. Allies think that a decision by NATO to cease implementation will be

momentous and thus must be carefully considered. Some Allies noted specifically that if NATO stopped implementing, that would erode the regime, give Russia an easy way out of CFE, and make it more difficult for Moscow to take a decision to negotiate seriously with us. Key highlights of the discussion include:

-- The Netherlands (Kleinjan) initiated discussion on the way ahead with an intentionally provocative intervention that outlined a number of options and possible outcomes which were summarily dismissed by all who spoke afterwards. The Dutch "options" included: 1) do nothing which would lead to Russian withdrawal from CFE and Allies receiving the brunt of the blame; 2) continue with the action-for-action path, but "resuscitate" the package by initiating ratification which would amount to capitulation to Russian demands thereby not making it an attractive option politically; 3) maintain a public dialogue on resolving the CFE impasse, but also initiate a separate dialogue with Russia on conventional arms control after-CFE which would essentially concede that CFE is dead while sparing the awkwardness of burying it; or 4) convene - with Russia's buy in - a "joint" extraordinary conference during which Allies would act on many of the elements of the parallel actions package to include exploring the possibilities of modernizing the Treaty.

-- No Ally supported the substance of the Dutch proposal, though several welcomed this effort to frame options comprehensively. Several Allies said or implied that the Dutch presentation offered a "caricature" (the Germans, term) of what the real options were. Several, including the U.S., argued that being patient and waiting for Russia to respond to the ideas NATO has on the table was not the same as "doing nothing." Others said that the quickest way to lose the current Treaty was to hint at discussion of a new one, and called for keeping the focus on saving CFE. The UK and France underscored that we should not consider an Extraordinary Conference unless we knew what we would achieve by it.

-- The U.S. said that it is prepared to continue bilateral engagement with Russia on the basis of the parallel actions

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package and underscored the need for Allies to remain firm and show resolve. The NAC Statement represents a strong and unified NATO approach endorsed in the Summit Declaration by Heads of State and Government. It is appropriate to be patient and give that position time to be considered by Russia. Look noted Allies will need to consider carefully how long we can continue our policy of continued implementation of CFE, which we have said cannot continue "indefinitely." But she agreed with others who want to proceed with such consideration in a step by step manner, taking into account all the potential down-sides of each choice. Look pushed back on the Dutch options, by emphasizing that we are not certain of Russia's ultimate intentions and our aim should be to find ways to persuade Russia to return to compliance and negotiate seriously. She dismissed the notion that waiting for a constructive Russian response was the equivalent to doing nothing and suggested that any change in the NATO position on implementation of CFE could result in Russia walking back rather than returning to compliance. Look stressed that now is not the time to rethink what Heads of Government just affirmed in Bucharest.

-- Germany (Biontino) underscored that they could not support any option that would degrade the current situation, and especially any option that risks deterioration of the current arms control system, although not perfect, it is key to European stability. Biontino noted the parallel actions package is a strong negotiating position which covers the range of issues and stressed that we should not add to it nor capitulate. Allies must exercise patience by maintaining a unified stance behind the NAC statement which would allow Russia time to appreciate the serious offer that is on the

table and respond to it accordingly, and not by setting artificial deadlines or dates that would only serve to precipitate erosion of the regime.

-- France (Grand) echoed U.S. and German calls for patience highlighting that it made no sense to even consider an alternative proposal just one month after Bucharest in light of Russia,s mixed reaction to the NAC statement and our uncertainty over Russia,s intentions. Grand was very clear that in the interest of avoiding further deterioration of the current situation, Allies should not call an extraordinary conference without a clear purpose and should not set artificial deadlines especially prior to upcoming high level meetings in the fall.

-- Romania (Micula), unusually reticent regarding the way ahead, responded to the Dutch "options" by stressing that Allied unity is essential, "to wait is not necessarily doing nothing," and setting artificial deadlines could be detrimental to the Allied position by unnecessarily increasing pressure on Allies rather than on Russia. Micula noted the NAC statement and Bucharest declaration sent a strong, unified message to Russia and indicated that for now Allies should continue observing Russia,s actions. Russia may not be in compliance, but had not yet crossed any red lines that merited a response. However, Allies must monitor the situation in Georgia especially as regards any use of Gudauta, the increase of Russian troops in Abkhazia, and implications for Istanbul commitments.

-- Turkey (Gun) along with Canada, Greece, Norway, and the UK expressed full support for the German, French and U.S. positions noting the NAC statement fully endorsed by Heads of State/Government is a solid basis from which to move forward.

All echoed that there was no need for artificial deadlines; now is not the time for NATO Allies to cease fulfilling Treaty obligations. Allied solidarity remains key, meaning there should be no changes to the package, rather Russia should be given time to respond formally. The UK (Ford) specified that the Netherlands had mischaracterized the current situation, which was not doing nothing, but actually "active patience" with a unified, clear position as outlined in the NAC statement in support of the bilateral process.

-- Canada (Arpin) questioned what would constitute a CFE red line, namely regarding Russia,s current actions in Abkhazia, and specifically in Gudauta. The Chair (Simmons) offered a recap of recent events that clouded the issue by incorrectly asserting the Russian fighter had taken off from Gudauta and implying that Russia,s augmented peace keeping forces were reinforcing Gudauta. The U.S. clarified the factual errors and all agreed at this point to continue monitoring further Russian actions to include assessing the CFE compliance

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implications.

HLTF Proposals

16. (C) While Allies agreed to maintain a steady course holding to the substance of the recently agreed NAC statement, a number of interim concrete proposals and issues were raised:

-- France suggested, and many Allies welcomed, the idea of an HLTF "retreat" to take a full day to analyze the situation in depth and consider next steps, perhaps in the fall or winter.

The U.S. (supported by Turkey) noted the timing and agenda would need to be carefully considered to include the message--intentional or not--such an event may send to Russia. Romania not only welcomed the NATO-only seminar idea along with Greece, Norway, and Canada, but also volunteered to host the event in the fall. This idea will be further explored and discussed at the next HLTF.

-- Regarding continued dialogue with Russia and reinforcing the firm Allied message, the Chair mentioned that the May 15 NATO CHODs meeting will include a session in NRC format with Russia. Simmons noted that Baluyevskiy is likely to attend and raise CFE, reminding Allies that the last three times this has happened no Allied CHOD had responded to Baluyevskiy's assertions. All agreed it would be useful to send a clear message at both the CHODs, meeting in May and the NRC Defense Ministers, meeting in June.

-- The U.S. raised the issue of Russia using the JCG in Vienna to sow division among Allies and asked others to consider the costs of continuing to meet on a weekly basis in the fall in light of the current environment. She noted that this was not an issue for today but one we need to consider in the coming months. For example, if in the autumn the JCG met less frequently, Allies could still register concerns with non-compliance while minimizing Russia's ability to stir trouble. Germany, noting Allies have been successful at preventing Russia from driving wedges, expressed concern about reducing the frequency of JCG meetings. Biontino opined that the JCG should continue to meet regularly, but acknowledged the need to control the agenda and continue to rebuff any attempts to discuss general security issues or accession to CFE by the Baltic states.

Meetings on the Margins

¶10. (C) U.S. rep Look and team met on the margins of the HLTF with the UK, France, and Germany and bilaterally with Turkey, Romania and Norway. At the key Allies (Quad) meeting discussion, it was quickly apparent that all were on board with calling for unity, patience and resolve in the HLTF on the basis of the NAC statement and discouraging any calls for immediate response. The costs of any step by Allies on CFE would have to be carefully weighed. Of note, Germany and France reiterated their interest in holding a Quad plus 1 format meeting with Russia, which France noted had been agreed to in principle by the political directors and, together with Germany, claimed would push Antonov to provide a Russian assessment of the parallel actions package. Germany also suggested meeting in the NRC (ACE) format to push for an answer to the NAC statement. The U.S. (supported by France) expressed concerns about the utility of such a format if Russian Chief Arms Control Delegate Ulyanov was to be the Russian representative. This idea was trumped by the French proposal of an HLTF (thus, NATO-only) "retreat" discussed in para 6. The UK was interested in looking beyond the fall but agreed the waters were too murky at this point to consider long-term strategy. The UK, Germany and France raised the issue of the upcoming U.S. election and noted that Russia may choose to delay resolution on CFE in order to take up the issue with the next administration.

¶11. (C) Turkey. Turkish HLTF rep Gun was also on board with the message of patience and resolve. Gun reported that bilateral consultations with DFM Kislyak had finally been set for May 12 to address CFE and other pol-mil issues. He noted Turkey would use the opportunity to emphasize that Russia's insistence on eliminating flank restrictions for Russia would cause ratification problems for Turkey. U.S. rep Look and

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State/EUR Laurendeau asked Gun to also use the meeting to seek any insights on Russia's strategic vision on CFE/arms control as an element of Russian security, and whether Russia has a strategy for the endgame on CFE.

¶12. (C) Romania. U.S. rep Look met bilaterally with Romanian rep Micula while Laurendeau chaired a bilateral meeting with Norway. During discussions, it was evident that Romania supported a steady approach, but Micula took the opportunity to express some ideas on a strictly bilateral

basis and to provide a paper with input on the parallel actions package.

-- Micula speculated that it is possible Russia wants to achieve a "Third CFE Treaty" either by dismantling the current regime and negotiating something new or by getting the adapted Treaty in force with modifications. However, he opined that Russia was not likely concerned about a world without CFE as NATO was a predictable partner that is not a rival to Russia. Look noted the U.S. had not reached that conclusion and remained uncertain of Russia's overall intentions.

-- Micula floated the idea of an extraordinary conference requested by a non-NATO State Party, but quickly agreed with the U.S. assessment that the timing was not yet right as, no matter who called it, there needed to be a clear purpose or it would unnecessarily increase pressure on Allies. Micula also raised the issue of the upcoming U.S. election noting concern with Germany trying to use it as cover for taking the lead on CFE. Look assured him that Germany wanted to be involved in the process, but we had no sense of any intention to take the lead.

-- At the end of the meeting, Micula provided the U.S. del with a paper "for A/S Fried" (see full text in para 15) which indicates concern that the current version of the parallel actions package "may open the door for the legitimization of a long term military presence near the Romanian/NATO border." Romania cannot live with the formulation "when possible" regarding the Russian withdrawal from Moldova. They want specific timeframes for the withdrawal of munitions and the transformation of the peacekeeping force in addition to specific parameters as to the composition of the force to be able to initiate ratification of Adapted CFE. Micula was clear that these were issues for bilateral discussions and did not make any of those points in the HLTF plenary.

¶13. (C) Norway. EUR/RPM Laurendeau chaired a bilateral meeting with Norwegian rep Loken while Look met separately with Romania. Norway requested the meeting in order to touch base with the U.S. on prospects for progress in U.S.-Russia bilateral talks on CFE, to underscore core Norwegian positions on CFE (keep CFE, and keep the flank regime), and to brainstorm more generally on the way forward. Loken was visibly relieved when Laurendeau explained that the U.S. had not come to the HLTF with a proposal to change course on CFE. Loken made clear that for Norway, maintaining CFE is a priority, and any steps that might place it in greater jeopardy would be viewed skeptically in Oslo. Patience and persistence in promoting our proposals were to be preferred over changes of course that might have unintended consequences. Continuing to implement CFE was not difficult, and it sends the right message. He agreed with Laurendeau's assessment that NATO had done well in sending a unified message to Russia in the NAC statement and at Bucharest. Laurendeau said the U.S. was ready to continue discussions with Russia bilaterally, but that the situation in Georgia had complicated prospects for the next bilateral meeting. Moreover, it did not appear that Russia was in a hurry to solve CFE. She added that the U.S. placed the highest priority on NATO unity: whatever happened to CFE, we could not allow Russia's steps against the Treaty to undermine Alliance solidarity.

Next HLTF Meeting

¶14. (SBU) Next Meeting. Allies agreed to meet again in late June and the I.S. has proposed that the next meeting be held on Tuesday, June 24.

115. (SBU) BEGIN TEXT.

Romania,s perspective on key parameters of the Parallel
Action Package
For US only

Romania attaches great importance to the entering into force
of the Adapted CFE Treaty, as it is designed to further
strengthen the security and stability in Europe.

Therefore, Romania has constructively supported the US
tireless efforts aiming at overcoming the current impasse
caused by the Russian "suspension" of the implementation of
the CFE Treaty and welcomed from the very beginning the
principles of the Parallel Action Package.

Nevertheless, some provisions of the Package, in its current
version, may open the door for the legitimization of a long
term military presence near the Romanian/NATO border.

Consistent with the NATO traditional policy, Romania
continues to attach the highest importance to the fulfillment
of Istanbul commitments, thus paving the way for the
ratification of the Adapted CFE. The core principle of this
policy is to avoid the legitimizing of any illegitimate
military presence near the Romanian borders. This represents
a national security concern. Under no circumstances should a
Kaliningrad-type solution be envisaged near the Eastern
Romanian border--at the same time a NATO border.

As a matter of principle, Romania will not accept a formula
that will just endorse the continuation of the current
Russian military presence, without any clear prospects for
its withdrawal. In the absence of a strict calendar for such
a withdrawal, aiming at the fulfillment of the Istanbul
commitments, Romania will not be in the position to launch
the ratification of the Adapted CFE Treaty. Any final
agreement should contain clear indication on the following
issues: the timeframe, with specific deadlines, for the
gradual transformation of the peacekeeping force into a
civilian presence, as well as a clear calendar for the
withdrawal of munitions; the percentage that Russia will
provide in the civilian mission that will replace the
so-called "peacekeepers"; the command and control structure
of the future mission.

In anticipation of a more detailed discussion on the
provisions of the Parallel Action Package, from the Romanian
perspective, any final agreement should envisage the
following optimal key parameters:

-- A timeframe of 3 to 6 months for the complete withdrawal
or destruction of Russian munitions from the Republic of
Moldova, accompanied by the withdrawal of the Russian forces
responsible for the security of the stocks. Prior to this,
within 45 days of the date of the agreement, a joint
OSCE-Russia inventory of the existing munitions stocks would
be conducted. Throughout the process, periodic OSCE
observation visits would take place.

-- A timeframe of 6 to 9 months for the transformation of the
Russian peacekeeping force into a civilian mission, under
OSCE mandate, time-limited and with the possibility of
further extension. The process can be divided into two
phases: 45 days for the agreement on the mandate, including
size, composition and command structure of the future
mission, followed by a two or three stage (each of three
months) withdrawal and corresponding replacement of the
Russian troops with elements of the civilian mission (around
300 soldiers at each stage in case of a three (sic) stage
process or around 200 soldiers in case of a three stage
process). The command of the mission would be assumed by a
civilian. The size of the civilian mission would be around
700, including a multinational component of civilian

observers (150-200) and a multinational component of rapid reaction forces (400-500 police/gendarmerie). The Russian participation in the mission would be up to 33 percent. The entire process would be monitored by OSCE, being correlated with a process of demilitarization of the Transnistrian region, and a process of implementation of CSBMs aiming at facilitating the political settlement of the Transnistrian conflict.

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NULAND